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SUBJECT: COUNCIL FAVORS TWO-WEEK ROLLOVER OF UNMEE'S MANDATE

REF: 05/08/2006 BRUNO-DEPARTMENT E-MAIL

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a May 8 briefing to the Security Council, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Assistant-Secretary-General Annabi told Members that if the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) were to continue its monitoring activities and eventually support border demarcation, then its present force size must be maintained and it must re-occupy the 18 posts from which it was forced by Eritrean restrictions to vacate. The Greeks sought Members' input on a proposal to extend UNMEE's current mandate for an additional two weeks to accommodate the May 17 convening of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), and Members favored this go-slow approach, as they had indicated informally to USUN during the week of May 1. However, there was support for Ambassador Bolton's analysis that 'the time had come' to downsize UNMEE in order to force Ethiopia and Eritrea to live up to their obligations under UNSCR 1640 (2005). We expect that the May 10 Experts Meeting will produce a text that calls for downsizing after the May 17 meeting. END SUMMARY.

DPKO STILL NO HELP ON DOWNSIZING

12. (SBU) In meetings of UNMEE troop-contributing countries and of the Security Council, DPKO A/SYG Annabi was unambiguous: UNMEE is needed for demarcation., He qualified the options for UNMEE,s future as he had presented them January 3 by saying they were meant to be responses to the negative impact of Eritrean restrictions. If UNMEE were to assist with border demarcation, Annabi said, the ban on its freedom of movement would have to be lifted. In this case, the January 3 options would no longer apply. To support demarcation, UNMEE would need both its full monitoring capabilities and its original force strength restored, Annabi said, and no option could provide the conditions necessary for fulfillment of this aspect of its mandate.,

GREECE BEGINS CALL FOR TWO-WEEK ROLLOVER

13. (SBU) Greek PR Vassilakis, whose delegation sponsors Ethiopia/Eritrea resolutions on the Council, proposed a two-week rollover of UNMEE,s mandate until May 30 to allow for the May 17 EEBC meeting to take place. He added that if there were no border progress by that date, the Council must take some action,, but he reiterated what Annabi had just stated about the options for UNMEE,s reconfiguration, especially transformation to an observer mission, being insufficient for supporting border demarcation.

¶4. (SBU) While all delegations favored a technical rollover this time and agreed UNMEE reconfiguration should come after the May 17 EEBC meeting, a growing sense of impatience emerged among Members. Chinese Deputy PR Zhang, for example, said China was ready to consider other options for UNMEE,s future beyond a technical rollover. UK PR Jones Parry, as his delegation had privately indicated to USUN, noted that the Council could not hang on indefinitely before making a fundamental change, to UNMEE,s mandate. Slovakian PR Burian, whose delegation had long favored Option 2 (relocation of force headquarters and elements to Addis Ababa with a liaison office in Asmara), said work needed to be done toward such a change. Even Qatari PR al-Nasser remarked that the Council should send a clear message that the parties, intransigence must be put off.

¶5. (SBU) Japanese PR Oshima, echoing USUN talking points, said UNMEE,s mandate must be streamlined, to reflect the potential progress being made on border demarcation. Danish PR Loj noted that accepting a technical rollover (as her delegation indicated it would) could be interpreted as the Council,s downplaying the problems between Ethiopia and Eritrea, since the SC had not been consistent in its linkage of rollovers with EEBC meetings in past resolutions. She urged sustained contingency planning for UNMEE downsizing.

¶6. (SBU) The African delegations were more measured. Congolese PR and SC President Ikouebe agreed to the two-week rollover but warned that subsequent consideration of UNMEE,s mandate should be based on the degree of parties, compliance with UNSCR 1640 (2005). Tanzanian Deputy PR Manongi warned that downsizing could negatively impact the humanitarian situation in and around the Temporary Security zone (TSZ),

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and must thus be considered carefully.

U.S., FRANCE STILL SUPPORT FORCE REDUCTION

¶7. (SBU) French PR de La Sabliere got right to the point: Given the lack of tangible progress by the parties toward demarcation, UNMEE should be downsized to a force of 1,500 now as a way to increase pressure ahead of the May 17 meeting. Ambassador Bolton agreed, adding that reducing the scope of the parties, security blanket, could also encourage their compliance with UNSCR 1640. He urged that the Council send an unmistakable, signal in this resolution that UNMEE,s size must be reduced.

¶8. (SBU) The Greeks will hold the first Experts Meeting on the draft resolution text (contained refmail) May 10; given the vast Council support for a two-week rollover, we are working with Members to secure language in OP4 that would ensure transformation to a force of 1,500 come May 30 by linking it to the modest border demarcation progress currently underway.

BOLTON